

# ‘Israel’s Security Is Paramount’

## An Interview with Indiana Rep. Dan Burton

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WASHINGTON— One of Israel’s most reliable friends in Washington is Congressman Dan Burton (R-Indiana). Burton, 66, is now serving his eleventh term and is expected to be re-elected in November.

Since 1983 Burton has served in key congressional posts, chairing the House Committee on Government Reform, the Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness, and the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations. He is also co-founder of the Republican Study Committee and a senior member in the Subcommittees on Europe and on Asia and the Pacific.

Last year, after a two-year investigation into the illegal kidnappings of American citizens in foreign countries, Burton sponsored an amendment that gives the State Department and Congress the tools they need to better negotiate the safe return of American citizens who are kidnapped.

This amendment earned him a special editorial in The Wall Street Journal titled “Dan the Man,” praising him for making the likes of Saudi Arabia understand the high price to be paid for molesting U.S. citizens.

But, says Burton, “My major commitment in the Middle East in addition to stability in that region is the security of Israel.”

Last Friday he spoke with The Jewish Press concerning Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s proposed disengagement from Gaza and the consequences of a Palestinian state. As the interview took place hours after Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry delivered his acceptance speech at the Democratic convention, the address was naturally a topic of immediate interest.

**The Jewish Press: How would you rate Kerry’s acceptance speech?**

Burton: I thought the speech was very good, I thought his children did an outstanding job. The problem was that Senator Kerry did not address a lot of the issues that are extremely important. He did not give solutions that face this country. His speech will not sell over the long run.

**Which issues in particular?**

For instance, he talked about dealing with Iraq on the cheap. He voted against additional funding for the troops in Iraq. We don’t see how he can have it both ways, saying he was supportive of the conflict – he wanted to make sure there were adequate funds and then he voted against it. He didn’t mention a lot of the other problems in the Middle East, like the Israeli-Palestinian issue, which is very important to stability in the entire region.

He talked about dealing with an awful lot of domestic problems but he didn’t tell how he was going to pay for them. And he talked about curtailing some of the tax cuts that we have passed which have stimulated economic growth. If you repeal those tax cuts we believe it will put the economy into the wrong mode.

**How do you react to his running mate John Edwards’s call to the voters to “reject the tired, old, hateful, negative, politics of the past and instead embrace the politics of hope?”**

I don’t believe that the president has been vitriolic in attacking. The president has been trying to deal with the terrorist threat, he has been trying to deal with the economy, so I don’t understand the “tired old politics of the past.” The president is trying to deal with problems and they’re trying to make it look like he has a hateful administration.

**In your view, how is the war against terrorism to be waged?**

Well, it’s the kind of war that we have never faced before. You have faceless enemies. You know who the leaders are but you have people who are in hoods, who will blow themselves up in order to make a point, and who kill people who are in positions of leadership. They are trying to disrupt the economy of the world.

So what we have to do is to use our intelligence-gathering capability to a greater degree than we have ever before. We need to put more resources into that so we can infiltrate these terrorist groups and find out what they plan to do before they do it.

We need to be very proactive; we cannot be reactive. We have to make sure that we don’t wait until they attack and then do something. We have to make sure that if we suspect terrorists, we get hold of them



Members of the Rabbinical Congress for Peace present Congressman Dan Burton with copy of halachic ruling that it is forbidden by Jewish law to give up an inch of land to enemies on the grounds that it will lead to bloodshed (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, Chapter 329) (L-R) Rabbi Joseph Gerlitzky, RCP chairman; Burton; Rabbi David Drukman, RCP deputy chairman; Jewish Press correspondent and delegation member Avraham Shmuel Lewin.

and keep them until we check everything out. That, of course, many people view as a violation of their civil rights and their constitutional rights – which in some cases is true. But we are in a different world now than we were in before. We have to make sure that we preempt a terrorist attack instead of reacting to it after it happens.

**In light of what you just said, do you think Israel, by disengaging from Gaza, is waging the war against terrorism properly?**

I personally believe that until there is a guarantee, an absolute ironclad guarantee for the security of Israel, that Israel ought to do everything they can to stem the tide of terrorism in that region. I don’t think that acquiescing to Hamas, Hizbullah and Palestinian demands, giving up Gaza and the homes that are over there, is a proper approach.

I understand Ariel Sharon is a fine man, I’ve met with him in the past. But it seems to me that if you start taking steps to appease the enemy you give them a green light to put more pressure on you. And he faces problems which I may not be familiar with, so I’m not going to criticize him. But from the outside it appears to me that until there is an ironclad guarantee for the security of Israel there should be no steps to appease the Palestinians.

**Do you support the creation of a Palestinian state?**

I believe the number one issue is the security of Israel, and until that is guaranteed by the PLO, Hizbullah, Hamas and all the terrorist organizations, you should not even discuss anything like that.

**You have been watching Israel for many years. You saw Israel’s sweeping victory dur-**

**ing the Six day War, you saw Israel during the Entebbe rescue and during the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor. How would you compare that kind of Israel to the Israel of today?**

I believe, as Winston Churchill said, the strongest defense is a good offense. When you are threatened, you do what has to be done to protect the citizens of your country and you take aggressive action. You don’t react to terrorists.

You don’t acquiesce to terrorists and you don’t appease terrorists. I think in the past Israel has been very aggressive in dealing with threats to its existence. I hope that strength will remain so that eventually the enemies of Israel will realize that the only solution is to make sure that there is a guarantee of stability for that region and Israel. If that happens then I think there could be peace throughout the region and they can start discussing other things like a Palestinian state.

But I don’t think you can do that during a time when there are terrorist attacks being perpetrated on a fairly regular basis and every time Israel doesn’t do what the terrorists want there are more attacks.

When Israel looks like they are going to appease the terrorists by moving in the other direction, then it encourages more terrorism.

So I think Israel’s history of being strong and taking the fight to the enemy when necessary is the only way to convince them that Israel will continue to exist and that the only alternative is to guarantee the security of Israel and then you can discuss other issues.

**Why should Americans re-elect President Bush?**

I think the president has a record of taking the battle to the enemy, the terrorists, not waiting for them to attack further here in the U.S. The president of the United States has taken steps to protect not only the Jewish population but the entire population of the U.S. by creating a Homeland Security Department.

By taking the battle to the enemy in Iraq and in Afghanistan I think that sends a message that we are going to fight terrorism wherever it exists. Ultimately it will be beneficial to Israel as well.

Mr. Kerry has a history of not supporting offensive action against terrorists. Although he had a good record when he was in the military and Vietnam, when he came back he was a peace activist, and I’m not sure that the American people will feel secure with that kind of history of a man in the White House.

**Do you plan to run for president yourself at some point?**

No. As Everett Dirksen said when he was asked by a reporter if he was running for president, “Young man, the boat has left the dock and I wasn’t on it.” I think at my age the thought of doing that is probably not realistic.

But my major commitment in the Middle East, in addition to stability to that region and making sure that Iraq develops some kind of democracy, is the stability of Israel.

It is imperative in my opinion for the U.S., for our security, for stability in that region and in the world, that we make sure that the security of Israel is guaranteed. That means that the terrorists, Hizbullah, Hamas and the PLO have to realize that the U.S. as an ally is not going to let them drive the Israelis into the sea.

There should be no negotiations until there is an absolute guarantee that the security of Israel is going to be a top issue.